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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

The recents events surrounding Hillary Clinton’s e-mail "scandal" just reenforces the point that our political system is out of control. Hillary is a liar who continues to maintain that she’s done nothing wrong. The fact that the FBI doesn’t recommend bringing charges against her while at the same time stating that she was wrong, but not criminally accountable (or however it was phrased), is all a political ploy. Is it any surprise that our current president is supporting her? Say what you want about Trump - and it may likely be true - but it’s time for a real change in Washington!

Unfortunately, our political scene was overshadowed this week by a number of killings in this country, culminating with the murders of five police officers in Dallas, and the wounding of seven others. The shooting deaths by police officers in Louisiana and Minnesota were terrible incidents, likely as a result of poor judgement and fear by the police. I’m hoping that these shootings weren’t as a result of something more sinister, but it’s certainly possible. The events in Dallas were worse because they were premeditated - calculated murders. The victims may have been random, but the act was planned. These police officers getting killed does nothing to help the attempts by protesters across the country make valid points; but, it does provide police with more reason to be fearful

Until next time...

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FireBee News Update

By Fred Horvat

With Summer here and vacations I have not been around much to work with the FireBee. This week I worked a little bit again on my Networking issue with EasyMiNT is that Netsurf getting no route to host error. What this means is that my DNS (Domain Name System)

is not configured or working properly. The DNS is the part of the networking that translate www.atari.com to a numerical address that the TCP/IP networking can understand. In this case atari.com translates to 198.61.147.252. If I do type http://198.61.147.252 atari.com Web Site will come up. So much easier to type atari.com than the actual numerical address that s for sure. I can PING addresses inside my network but it appears that the FireBee can not see my router properly. I am on my network with a proper network address but the FireBee can not see any Web Sites out on the Internet.

I installed the original FreeMiNT CF Card into the FireBee to get the network utilities off and look at the Networking Configuration file in the c:\mint folder to see if there were any differences between the EasyMiNT and original FreeMiNT systems. What I found out was that the the network.cnf file located in c:\mint\ was the same in EasyMiNT and the FreeMiNT. The contents of the file are the next four lines.

```
#DHCP
echo Starting DHCP client
exec /c/mint/sys/net/dhclient.ttp -q -nw -lf /c/mint/sys/dhcp/lease -pf /c/mint/
sys/dhcp/pid -sf /c/mint/sys/dhcp/script
```

These being the same then obviously the problem is somewhere else. That s as far as I got this week and hopefully I get this figured out. I really do like using SpareMiNT under Aranym and the latest builds of NetSurf work fine under SpareMiNT where they do not under the included FreeMiNT that comes with the FireBee.

Until next time.

Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus Swap 2016
ACEC 2016 VINTAGE COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAME SWAP MEET

GREAT NEWS COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAME FANS!!!

The Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus will be holding the annual vintage computer and video game swap meet on Saturday August 27th 2016.We are limiting the tables to 2 per dealer. If we find that there are still tables available. Then the vendor(s) will be able to use them. Also we have noticed in the past that people reserve tables and not show up. So if a dealer does not show up by 8:30 am. the day of the show, there table might be given to someone else. As you might notice, we have a new name. This year we are going to include all vintage and classic computers and video games, systems, accessories, games, and software. So please check our web site often for updates. Please let us know if you would like some tables.

Maynard Ave. United Methodist Church
2350 Indianola Ave.
Columbus, Oh.
The church is located on Indianola Ave several blocks south of Hudson St.

Right now the time for the swap meet is from 9:00 a.m. to

3:00 p.m.

Admission is FREE! FREE! FREE!

That is right, it is free for both vendors and shoppers! Just to let you know. ACEC was at the CORGS show and several dealers signed up for tables there. Vendors, please contact us to reserve tables. As it will be first come first serve. We may have to limit the number of tables for each vendor.
Please check back often for updates and further information.

Updates are at: http://www.angelfire.com/oh4/acec/acec.html
(But be aware and don t be fooled. This free hosting is notorious for pop-ups including virus scare alerts. As best I know there is nothing overtly malicious. Just don t click beyond club info and be ready to dismiss the junk).

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Resident Evil 4' - Is It Worth Buying Again?

"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Nintendo To Sell 100 Million Wii U Consoles?

Inside The Art of Atari!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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'Resident Evil 4' Comes To Next-Gen Consoles On August 30,
But Is It Worth Buying Again?

Capcom has announced that Resident Evil 4 will be coming to the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One on Aug. 30, marking an end to the releases of modern Resident Evil games for next-gen consoles that began with RE6 on March 29.

Often regarded as the best game in the series, Resident Evil 4 marked a new beginning for the series that almost never came to fruition. The game was cancelled and restarted from scratch multiple times, so many times, in fact, that the original version of Resident Evil 4 eventually became Devil May Cry.

The team tangled with issues that prevented the earlier games from reaching true levels of greatness, such as fixed camera angles, stiff movement and unintuitive controls, and in the end, they came to a solution in the best way possible. The game

replaced shambling zombie hordes with a mob of infected humans (a trend that continues to this day), movement became fluid, and most importantly, players were blessed with its over-the-shoulder camera.

Originally released for the PlayStation 2 and GameCube in 2005, the game has seen plenty of ports since then, including Windows, Wii, Zeebo, iOS, PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. Now, according to the announcement, come Aug. 30, 2016, it will be on pretty much every platform worth mentioning.

Quite frankly, it’s become something like Final Fantasy VII (which, coincidentally, is getting a re-release on Android today) in regards to how many ports and releases it’s gotten over the years. At this point, all it needs is a remake and the cycle will be complete.

With that said, it might be considered the best Resident Evil, but is the fourth entry worth buying again? Presumably, the game will cost $20, just like Resident Evil 6 and Resident Evil 5, so it’s not too expensive as a standalone purchase. However, for those who have played other versions, even $20 might be too much to ask for.

Unfortunately, the available content doesn’t help this port’s case too much, either, as all that’s included is the bonus content from the original game (including the New Game Plus option), along with the Mercenaries mode and features added to later versions of the game (which has been present since the Wii version). It’s possible that this re-release will restore the background from the GC version and allow bonus costumes to appear in cutscenes, but if that is truly the case, then Capcom has yet to comment on it.

Yes, the game is awesome and is most definitely a must-buy for those who have yet to play it, but if Resident Evil 5’s re-release is anything to go by, then this might be better off skipped, unless you really want to play it again and don’t have access to or don’t want to bother with your older version.

Nintendo Expected To Sell 100 Million Wii U Consoles

We all know that Wii U did not live up to the expectations that Nintendo had for it, but now we re getting a better idea of just how big the disappointment really was. Nintendo president Tatsumi Kimishima has revealed that the company originally projected to sell over 100 million Wii U consoles.

This was revealed during a recent shareholders meeting, where he went over things like initial Wii U projections and why they were so optimistic. He said the following:

In an internal sales representative meeting, someone projected that we would sell close to 100 million Wii U systems worldwide. The thinking was that because Wii sold well, Wii U would follow suit.

He goes on to say that I was responsible for selling the Wii U, and I knew what was good about it, so I talked with those in charge of sales about the importance of conveying the attractiveness of Wii U to consumers. I am guessing that some of this communication may have come across in a negative tone.

The Wii U currently sits around the 13 million global sales mark, and there isn t much coming this year to suggest any boost in sales anytime soon. The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild will certainly help things along, though that will also launch for the NX and isn t expected until Spring 2017.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!

Inside The Art of Atari

In October, Dynamite Entertainment will release "The Art of Atari," a 350-page illustrated coffee table book that celebrates the packaging and games that were part and parcel of the late-1970s and early-1980s era of console gaming.

Priced at $39.95, the 9.625" x 11" hardcover format book includes interviews with many of the people who worked at Atari, as well as production and concept artwork not yet seen. The book’s foreword is penned by "Ready, Player One" author Ernest Cline and is co-authored Tim Lapetino, who is also executive director of the Museum of Video Game Art.

Back in 2014, Polygon spoke to some of the great artists who created classic early game packaging, as well as former Atari chief Nolan Bushnell, who was inspired by record albums, a dominant consumer-cultural form at the time.

"I felt fundamentally that this was a consumer product that needed all the care and attention that a record album did," Bushnell said. "At the same time, I wanted to have something that was beautiful and instructive and I wanted the artwork to have a consistency to it, so that immediately, when you glanced at our packaging, you knew it came from Atari and you knew it was beautiful."

Polygon asked Lapetino to send over a few pages of the book, and to talk about their context, which you can see below, including pages that cover themes such as packaging, process and marketing as well as specific games like Breakout, Centipede and Yars’ Revenge.

"For me, this book was deeply satisfying to work on, because it digs into great art and design of Atari, and obviously is really tied tightly to the games that made up my childhood," says

Lapetino. "I’m glad to be able to shine a light on the illustrators, graphic designers, and industrial designers who in many ways, have been left out of design history.

"Because they worked in this pretty commercial, unusual field of video games, the emphasis usually tends to be on the game designers. That focus is earned. Without the games, we wouldn’t be talking about this. But also, these people were essential to the overall game experiences, and they were doing some pretty unbelievable work that needs to be recognized by the world of art and design.

"Being a designer myself, I’m fascinated by the places and ways in which design intersects with pop culture. Video games went from having their moment to growing into an industry that brings in more money than Hollywood. And a crucial aspect of getting to that point was design. Art and design shapes how we see products, companies, and even whole cultural moments. The two are intertwined, and I’m always excited to examine those historical moments and see how art and design plays out within them."

"When thinking about Atari’s great artwork, I think it’s easy to forget how the game packaging was often the first interaction someone would have with a game," says Lapetino. "Those boxes had to handle a lot of the sales and marketing duties that today would be done using advertising or social media. There was a crucial moment in a department store or TV shop where the box art would catch your eye and in those few seconds without a lot of in-depth reviews or the ubiquitous word of mouth we enjoy today. You made a decision based on the excitement and energy of that box."

"Breakout is an example of a game that is so simple and yet iconic in its game graphics that it lends itself to a wide interpretation in terms of artwork," explains Lapetino. "In home consoles, Cliff Spohn started this with the first version of Breakout for the 2600, and envisioned tennis players hitting a ball back and forth. It’s almost more like racquetball, in some ways. And Steve Hendricks had another idea that’s more fantasy-like and fanciful that ended up not being used, but it still comes down to those general themes of using something to break though this wall of bricks."

"Even beyond the great art of Centipede by Burrell Dickey, that game is intriguing because of its origins and the moment in which it was created," recalls Lapetino. "Amidst this deluge of space-based shooters and racing or sports games, you have some games like this, Pac-Man, Dig Dug and others, where I think you see a subtle shift in gameplay.

"These games seem like they are more inclusive, and a little bit more approachable, especially to women. They are friendlier, and the art also began to reflect that, with more character-based illustration. Centipede is still a shooting gallery style game, but it’s also a bit more whimsical and light, and accessible. I think the fact that programmer Dona Bailey was involved in the creation might have something to do with that, bringing that much-needed female perspective."

"Yars’ Revenge is one of my favorite pieces in the book, just

for the amazing airbrush work by Hiro Kimura. And he did a nice job of rendering the shiny, metallic skin of the flying insect.

"But it also helps that this was one of the iconic, original games for the 2600. It’s got amazing gameplay and a really original look and feel, and that’s reflected in how well it sold. It’s worth noting too that this was Howard Scott Warshaw’s first game, and he would go on to program Raiders of the Lost Ark, and the infamous E.T. game as well."

"In the book, I wanted to devote a whole section to graphic design, and the analog tools that designers of the time had to make the great packaging happen," says Lapetino. "I think it’s easy in this age of supercomputing and the ubiquity of digital software tools, to take for granted the level of craft and complexity needed to turn something from idea to final printed piece in the ’70s and ’80s. All of this was done by hand, from the original illustrations to the type being set and placed by hand on paste-ups or ’mechanicals,’ as they were called."

"These were super creative people crafting all of these pieces, but they were also artisans, people who could draw, paint, illustrate, craft typography. And they were doing this great work in the service of these video games. They were entertainment and fun, but they did this work seriously, and at a very high level."

You can find out more about "The Art of Atari" at:
http://www.artofatari.com/

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

This U.N. Ruling Protects Internet Access As A Basic Human Right

If you re at work and your boss is on your case for checking out memes, updating your various social media pages, and looking at your favorite website that has all of your news and cultural needs, you can now tell them that your internet usage is a basic human right and the United Nations said so.

Last Friday, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution that denounces countries that impede on their citizens internet access. Most countries were in favor of the resolution that states, the same rights people have offline must also be protected online, but of course, there were several countries adamantly opposed to the resolution. It is no surprise that China, Saudi Arabia, and Russia were against this push to expand freedom of expression to the online arena. These three nations are known for their extremely strict rules

regarding internet access.

The Verge states that the U.N. can t legally enforce this new resolution, but it puts pressure on governments and gives credence to the actions of digital rights advocates around the world. Thomas Hughes, the executive director of Article 19, a charity which focuses on defending the freedom of expression, praised the latest U.N. resolution stating:

From impunity for the killings of bloggers to laws criminalizing legitimate dissent on social media, basic human rights principles are being disregarded to impose greater controls over the information we see and share online.

Hopefully, this resolution will put an end to government internet shutdowns. Access Now, a global advocacy group protecting internet rights said that there have already been 20 recorded internet shutdowns this year alone. A social media shutdown recently occurred in Turkey where information regarding the recent airport bombing was blocked for Turkish citizens. A lot of shutdowns revolve around government protesting, but Algeria even shut down social media access so children in school wouldn t be able to cheat on tests. This resolution could be a big step towards global internet freedom regarding information and access.

Wendy’s Says More Than 1,000 Restaurants Affected by Hack

Wendy’s said hackers were able to steal customers’ credit and debit card information at 1,025 of its U.S. restaurants, far more than it originally thought.

The hamburger chain said Thursday hackers were able to obtain card numbers, names, expiration dates and codes on the card, beginning in late fall. Some customers’ cards were used to make fraudulent purchases at other stores.

Wendy’s Co. urged customers to check their accounts for any fraudulent purchases.

The Dublin, Ohio, company first announced it was investigating a possible hack in January. In May, it said malware was found in fewer than 300 restaurants. About a month later, it said two types of malware were found and the number of restaurants affected was "considerably higher."

There are more than 5,700 Wendy’s restaurants in the U.S.

Customers can see which locations were affected through the Wendy’s website . The company said it is offering free one-year credit monitoring to people who paid with a card at any of those restaurants.

ONLINE:

Wendy’s data breach information: https://www.wendys.com/en-us/about-wendys/the-wendys-company-updates

Wendy’s impacted restaurant search: https://payment.wendys.com/paymentcardcheck.html

This Scary New Mac Malware Will Let Hackers Take Over Your Computer

Up until this year, Mac users never had to worry about malware infecting their computers, but it appears that hackers have finally caught up with the platform. Originally discovered by Bitdefender, Backdoor.MAC.Eleanor is the name of a new piece of malware that creates a backdoor through which an attacker can gain access to the control-and-command center from the outside.

As Malwarebytes explains, the malware was available through MacUpdate (and other reputable sources) as a seemingly innocent piece of software called EasyDoc Converter. The app was described as a "fast and simple file converter for OS X," but running the app would install the Eleanor malware on your machine.

"This type of malware is particularly dangerous as it s hard to detect and offers the attacker full control of the compromised system, says Tiberius Axinte, Technical Leader, Bitdefender Antimalware Lab. For instance, someone can lock you out of your laptop, threaten to blackmail you to restore your private files or transform your laptop into a botnet to attack other devices. The possibilities are endless."

There is some good news the app was never signed with a certificate from Apple, and by default, Mac OS X won’t open any unsigned apps. On the other hand, Apple can’t revoke EasyDoc’s certificate, because it never received one.

You can read more about the specifics of how the malware works on Bitdefender’s blog, but the important takeaway here is that Mac’s are vulnerable to malware. Be careful when downloading files from anywhere on the Internet, and use Gatekeeper to keep yourself safe from potentially dangerous software.

Microsoft Goes Full-screen for Final Windows 10 Upgrade Nag

Microsoft’s Windows 10 upgrade notifications have been the subject of amusing weather forecasts, a $10,000 lawsuit, and generally annoying for many other people. While Microsoft is tweaking the regular upgrade prompt to make it less confusing for existing Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 users, the software giant is also preparing one last push to convince people to upgrade to Windows 10.

Microsoft’s free Windows 10 upgrade disappears after July 29th, and in the final days before the offer ends Microsoft is using a full-screen prompt to get people’s attention. The prompt will say "sorry to interrupt," before noting that the Windows 10 free

upgrade offer ends on July 29th. Windows 7.1 and Windows 8.1 users receiving the prompt will be able to upgrade immediately, remind later, notify three more times, or simply do not notify again. Not everyone will see the prompt, and Microsoft notes if existing users have the latest "Get Windows 10" app they won't see the full-screen prompt.

If an existing machine is incompatible Windows 10, has been upgraded to the latest OS and uninstalled, or failed to upgrade to Windows 10 then these users also won't see the full-screen prompt. Existing methods to block the Windows 10 upgrade prompts will also suppress this new full-screen notification. Microsoft is planning to charge $119 to upgrade to Windows 10 from July 30th onward, and the company is urging all Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 users to take advantage of the free upgrade over the next few weeks.

What's New in the Start Menu for Windows 10 Anniversary Update

The Windows 10 Anniversary Update introduces a redesigned Start menu, and here we tell you everything that has changed in the new experience.

The first anniversary update of Windows 10 packs a lot of new improvements and features. In this release, Microsoft is focused on making the operating system more secure. There is a big push for pen support with "Windows Ink", notifications get vastly improved, Microsoft Edge gets support for extensions, and the Start menu gets redesigned with enhancements for "efficiency and discoverability".

Ever since Microsoft removed the Start menu in favor of the Start screen, the way we access apps and settings have been an area of controversy for many users. However, on Windows 10, the classic Start menu style returned with a design that combines the Windows 7 Start menu with the Start screen introduced in Windows 8. And on the Anniversary Update, the menu gets new improvements, which according to Microsoft, aims to reduce clicking and scrolling.

In the new design that Microsoft introduces with the Windows 10 Anniversary Update improves the Start menu for the desktop and mobile devices.

The new menu is being updated with the same modern design language we see with the Windows Store apps. The Start menu now features a navigation pane on the left with a hamburger button at the top-left corner, and the user profile menu button has been moved to the bottom, above the Power, Settings, and File Explorer buttons, which have also been relocated to this section.

When you click the hamburger button, the left rail will expand revealing the labels for each item listed to have a better understanding of what each button does. Interesting enough, you'll also notice the "Start" label next to the hamburger button, a word that Microsoft hasn't shown in the menu since Windows XP.

The new design also removes the "All apps" button to access your apps. Instead Windows 10 now shows a single view that includes the "Most used" and "All apps" items. Basically, you can now open Start, hover over the menu and scroll up and down to quickly find and launch the app you want to use.

Of course, you can always click the letter (or number sign) to jump immediately to the letter listing the app you want to open.

The "Recently added" group now appears at the very top of the new unified list, and apps you have recently installed from the Store will stay listed for seven days, instead of three. Finally, the scroll bars now hide as soon as you move the mouse away from that area, rather than staying visible for a long period of time.

The Anniversary Update also brings similar improvements to the Start screen, when you use the menu on tablet mode or full-screen mode.

The new Start screen design continues to show the default Live Tile view, but it implements all the new changes found in the Start menu and a few more.

When clicking or tapping the hamburger button, the left rail will expand similarly to the regular menu, but you'll notice that the tiles view won't get pushed to the right. Instead, the new rail will overlay on top of the tile view.

Unlike the regular menu, the Start screen also features two new buttons to switch between "Pinned tiles" and "All apps".

The most noticeable change on the Start screen is the "All apps" list. The new list follows the same design as the smaller menu, but is optimized for touch.

Previously, when you could access all your apps with a simple list from the left pane. Now, on the Windows 10 Anniversary Update, you can click or tap the "All apps" button to access the new view that takes the entire screen.

The new "All apps" list implements a grid-like view that provides an efficient way to take advantage of the real estate of the Start screen on your touch-enabled device. The new list view is a balance between grouping as many apps as possible in one area, but without making the list too crowded to the point that it becomes too difficult to find the app you want.

The default view will show three columns of apps, but depending on your screen resolution, the list can be divided into more columns.

As part of the Start screen changes with the Anniversary Update, you can now take full advantage of the entire screen when using Windows Store apps by choosing the auto-hide the taskbar while in tablet mode. You can configure this new feature under Settings > System > Tablet Mode and turning on the Automatically hide the taskbar in tablet mode option. Once the feature is enabled, the taskbar will automatically hide when running apps,

but you can always swipe from the bottom up or dragging the mouse to the bottom of the screen to bring it back.

On the Windows 10 Anniversary Update, Live Tiles remain with the same look and feel, but they are getting smarter. Remember when you opened the Start menu and, for example, the News app tile showed you the latest headlines, you clicked one of the titles, the app opened, but the article you saw is nowhere to be found?

To address this issue, Windows 10 introduces a new feature called "Chaseable Live Tiles" that let you click a story, picture, or another type of content on a Live Tile and open the app to that particular content, instead of just opening the app.

While Chaseable Live Tiles is part of the Windows 10 Anniversary Update, it’s not something that works automatically with every app. It’s up to developers to update their apps properly to support the new feature.

After radical changes were made to the Start menu with Windows 8, Microsoft brought back the familiar menu with Windows 10, and now the company is being careful what goes in new improvements. In the new update, new changes are being introduced, but retaining the same Start design that matches the modern design language throughout the operating system with a familiar user interface.

Siri Takes Control as Apple’s macOS Sierra Beta Arrives

Less than a month after its unveiling at Apple’s Worldwide Developers Conference in June, macOS Sierra arrived today for beta testers who have signed up to try Apple’s new desktop operating system. This is the third year in a row Apple has offered a public beta of an upcoming desktop OS.

This year the Mac platform gets some significant enhancements, with Sierra bringing one notable feature that promises to change how users interact with their Mac. After teasing users in 2015 with a revamped Spotlight in OS X El Capitan that understood sophisticated requests, Sierra finally brings Siri to the Mac.

Siri’s integration means you’ll be able to control certain functions on your Mac using natural language voice commands, and Siri on the desktop is just as functional as Siri on the iPhone, and with Mac-specific tricks, too. From what I’ve seen using the early Sierra betas, I expect to be spending more time talking to my Mac.

Siri is accessed from an icon in the Dock, by invoking a key command or from the menubar.

Sierra isn’t due out in final form until sometime this fall. But beta users, as of today, can check out the tweaks and additions the upgrade offers to make using your Mac a better experience. Those features include picture-in-picture for videos, better photo organization, improved device collaboration via the Universal Clipboard, iCloud Drive (which allows shared Desktop and Documents across all of your Apple devices), and Auto

Unlocking your Mac when you wear your Apple Watch (running watchOS 3).

macOS Sierra will allow Apple Watch users to unlock their Mac automatically. (The option is tucked away in the Security preferences.)

But the biggest standout feature is Siri, which arrives on the desktop years after its debut as an app in iOS and then as a tent-pole feature for the iPhone platform. Apple now joins the ranks of other big-league developers, including Microsoft, Google and even Amazon, who are rapidly rolling out voice-activated features for their products. (FYI: Siri stacks up well against Cortana.)

Before I get into more details about Sierra, a programming note: If you haven't signed up for Apple's beta program but would like to, you can do so here. Just a warning: this is a beta, so there will likely be issues if you're running this operating system. Apple still has months of work ahead to bring Sierra to its final, shipping form. Remember: before you rush to install it, always have a backup of your computer, and never use a beta on production-critical hardware.

It's been five years since Siri's introduction on the iPhone. Since then, public acceptance of using voicing commands to control a device has slowly been on the rise. Amazon, Google and Microsoft all have virtual assistants now, and, for Apple's part, the Siri technology has been expanding the use of voice commands in a variety of devices. Siri has bounced from the iPhone to the iPad to Apple TV and CarPlay. If history is any indicator - and by history, I mean Apple's other product releases - Siri integration will absolutely change how you interact with the Mac - even if you're still not sold on voice interaction.

Why? Because over the years, Siri has learned platform-specific tricks that make interacting with devices much more effective. For instance, when Siri is prompted on the Apple TV for a specific show, Siri searches across all supported apps and displays the relevant results, saving you the trouble of opening and poking around for that specific show. And on Apple TV, rewinding and fast-forwarding to specific spots isn't much of an issue when you can tell Siri to just skip back or ahead with your voice.

Siri will be no different. It's still as whimsical as it is on the iPhone (ask how it feels about living in a Mac and Siri might joke about living in an aluminum housing with no Windows). But there are a variety of new tricks that should be helpful for day to day users.

Siri's new Preference pane under System Preferences allows you to customize it and change voices.

On the Mac, Siri is accessed from an icon in the Dock, by invoking a key command (Command-Space, by default) or from the menubar, next to the Notification and Spotlight icons. (The "Hey, Siri" voice invocation used in iOS - where Siri is always listening and can respond - isn't yet an option on the desktop.)

Siri can quickly deliver the latest weather forecast.

Once active, you can use Siri to create appointments and reminders, send messages, ask for current or future weather forecasts, play a specific song (or an entire album or playlist), check sports scores, or even ask for directions. All of these requests work just as expected. However, I did have trouble getting Siri to bring up photos in my Photo Library, but I'm chalking this up as a bug. (Remember, as I've already noted: using a beta, even a public one, means you will likely encounter issues.)

Siri still provides online and local searches, and when performing local searches, it recognizes Finder tags, dates and other attributes. That allows you to perform specific inquiries you'd normally turn to Spotlight for. Since Siri does a decent job following a particular train of thought, you can refine searches with follow-up questions or requests. Just don't be surprised if you get the occasional Siri sass. (During the WWDC keynote, Craig Federighi, Apple's senior vice president of software engineering, asked Siri to bring up some files he was looking for and she noted that his "data filin' was stylin'.")

Even better, Siri can save your queries and the results in the Notification area for quick access later. That means everything from local file searches to sports scores can be pinned there for easy access later. And from these search widgets, you can keep track of specific files for that project you're working on, drag and drop the results into live documents, or simply store sports scores for current games you're interested in.

Of course Siri isn t the only new feature in Sierra. Other useful additions include:

- The ability to play any video in a small window that hovers above your work
- Optimized storage, which can be used to free up space by clearing your hard drive of older files (and storing them in Apple s iCloud servers for later retrieval, or, in the case of obsolete system files, removing them entirely).
- Advanced Continuity features that allow Apple devices to communicate and work more effectively with each other, including the new Universal Clipboard. This lets you copy data or a picture on your iPhone and paste it into a document on your Mac without using Messages, Notes or AirDrop. The ability to easily move data between Apple devices is coming, and it already works pretty well in the public beta. (Note: For this to work, every device needs to be running the latest beta software.) This feature alone might be worth the upgrade in the fall for many.

When Siri was first released, I mused that any technology hoping to gain mass appeal had to be good enough to change someone's thought process from "Why are you using that?" to "Why aren't you using that?" Siri's capabilities and accuracy have grown over the years, and its features continue to evolve as the tech spreads from one Apple product to another. At the time, I wondered where the technology would go.

Now we know the answer: on our Macs. And now you can try it for yourself, months before other Mac users get their shot.

Should I Download MacOS Sierra Beta?

Mac OS X is so last year. This week, Apple released the macOS Sierra public beta to those who sign up to take part.

There are a lot of new features, including Siri, picture in picture, and above all iOS 10 integration (like device-to-device clipboard). Trying out new features is exciting for the Apple faithful, but you should be ready before your take the plunge.

If your Mac is a 2010 model or newer (late 2009 for iMacs and MacBooks), then you can run the beta. But should you? If you have IT-level technical knowledge, you're impatient, and most importantly you've kept an ongoing Time Machine backup of your current Mac, then go for it.

We advocate constant backups, but when you're upgrading your OS, we really emphasize that you need to create a backup and keep it safe and away from your Mac. Before you do anything, back up your Mac, disconnect the external hard drive, put that drive away, and go for the upgrade. Keep that backup separate, at least until the final macOS version is released in the fall. That way, if you have issues with app compatibility (or worse), you can wipe your Mac and return to where you were yesterday.

If you have IT-level knowledge and are cautious, then you'll know how to partition your hard drive or flash storage, and create a second Macintosh HD volume. You then can create a side-by-side installation for testing the new OS. It will be safer to run macOS from a second partition, so your main work environment is safe. This is only possible if you have lots of free space on your system.

Even better, if you have a "spare" Mac lying around, then this is a great opportunity to wipe that machine, do a fresh install of macOS Sierra, and skip the partitioning. The benefit here is that you don't have to worry about things going wrong on your main desktop or laptop, and can try all the features to your heart's content. We'd recommend wiping the test machine (again) and installing a fresh copy when the final macOS Sierra is released in the fall, but since it's a test machine, that's up to you.

We do not recommend macOS Sierra if you only have a single Mac that also functions as your work machine, or if you agree with the statement "My life is in this computer." Things go wrong all the time on Macs running stable versions of OS X, and in those cases you can get help from your IT department, experienced friends, or the Genius Bar.cOS Sierra

If you have problems while you're running a public beta, I will surmise that all three sources will say "Really? I haven't run into that issue, you should probably wipe your Mac and reinstall from a backup you made before the beta upgrade." Kiss your productivity for that day goodbye.

Every Mac user has a unique situation, so things may not be so cut and dried in your case. But if you're as excited about iOS 10 (which is also now available via public beta) and macOS Sierra as we are, then you'll be checking out new features all weekend like us.

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